

College Pro Painters for Life

It was hot. The type of hot that makes you want to take a bath in the Antarctic Ocean or eat a box of popsicles all in succession. The type of hot that leaves a sharp red burn on your neck that bites for days. Sweat stained our faces, trickled down our backs, and seeped through all areas of our clothing. Countless drips and streaks of a deep purple stain decorated our bodies. Even our once white bandanas had become a canvas for our summer's work, speckled with drops of paint from an array of different jobs we had completed. Three inch paint brush held firmly in one hand, 5 gallon paint bucket in the other, shirts tossed aside, flip flops barely covering our feet, and dirty rags tucked in our athletic shorts: Garritt and I were doing what we did all of that summer of 2012 - paint.

"This watermelon is my best friend... not even kidding right now dude," Garritt said to me as he passionately took another bite from the juicy melon.

"Bro... I kind of thought we were best friends though?" I replied as I wiped the excess succulent juices from underneath my chin.

"You dude? No man, were just co-workers. You're just somebody to talk to while I get my paint stroke on, know what I'm sayin'?"

"I see how it is then," I laughed, "you only like me for my watermelon."

"Exactly!" Garritt came back. Our often extended lunch breaks were typically the highlight of the day. It gave us a chance to escape the suffocating heat, unwind, and just talk.

"How much of that underside of the deck do you think we have left?" I asked changing subjects.

“Ahhh I don’t know man, at least another 6 hours of work for the each of us. We are already over budget hours too...”

“Really, that much left? Dangit, we’re over budget hours again dude?”

“Yeah man, same old song and dance. Underpaid and overworked,” Garritt laughed.

“I think you’re wrong dude! This deck will only take us another 3 hours or so as long as we cut down on our five minute breaks,” I said sarcastically.

Garritt was wrong. The underside of the deck took us another 10 hours of work each. We finished the job almost 20 hours over budget. Our base salary was minimum wage, so if we exceeded the given amount of budget hours for a project, we earned below minimum wage. In other words, Garritt and I had slaved over this project in the soaking sun for three full days of work for not even six dollars an hour pay. The system was flawed. The budget hours assigned were notoriously under-estimated. Garritt and I always used to joke that not even Sherwin Williams himself could beat the budget. At the end of that project, much like many others, we went home with nothing but skimpy paychecks and heads full of deep purple stained hair.

Just 6 months prior, this painting gig had seemed so attractive and adventurous. Garritt and I were interviewed at a dingy McDonald’s across town. At the time, nothing seemed peculiar about a professional job interview being held at a fast food joint, but an apprehensive thought never crossed our minds. While deep fryers sizzled in the background, Nic Rintoul, our soon to be boss, swindled us into believing the endless opportunity and wonderful employment that his company, College Pro Painters, had to offer.

“College Pro Painters – together, realizing potentials. The logo is blue boys because that’s the same color as the sky and with College Pro Painters – the sky’s the limit. You’ll start

making 10 dollars an hour with a chance to make even more, you decide when you want to work, and you'll be working outside with your friends. What more could you want?" Nic always used to preach this to us. Even though we soon found out that Nic Rintoul was a crooked businessman, we had to give the man one concession. He was one hell of a salesman. Nic could sell a pork dinner to an orthodox Jew. And at the same place where happy meals were being sold, Nic sold us. At that very moment Garritt and I shared the excitement of the preschoolers frolicking in the sticky ball pit as we proudly shook Nic Rintoul's hand and officially became College Pro Painters.

What ensued over the course of our 9 month employment with College Pro Painters was completely unpredictable. Garritt and I performed numerous assignments that were never described by our boss in the job description. We went door to door, marketing for College Pro Painters, pointing out far-fetched paint defects at people's houses, and made empty guarantees such as "Yes, we are bona fide, highly trained, professional painters" or "Yeah, contrary to popular belief you can actually paint over vinyl". We hadn't the slightest clue how to market something we had never in fact performed ourselves. However, after weeks and weeks of feeble doormat sale pitches, Garritt and I began to come into our own as paint job peddlers. Behind our confident smiles and sweet words, we truly had minimal knowledge of the painting industry, but we were convincing. People bought into our phony poise and purchased our painting services along with it.

Marketing for College Pro Painters was a challenge but the actual task of painting was the real struggle. Customers expected a professionally done job as we had personally guaranteed. Much to customer's dissatisfaction, expectations were often left unfulfilled that summer. Having being trained by Nic Rintoul in an 8 hour crash course in College Pro Painter

fundamentals, Garritt and I's painting skills remained rather rudimentary. Nic instilled catch phrases into us such as "be systematic", "fast and efficient, beat budget", and "okey dokes, good enough" and although Garritt and I found great amusement out of mimicking Nic's ludicrous one-liners all summer long, his amateur teaching set us up for inevitable failures.

With lack of proper training, Garritt and I honed our painting skills through a series of trials and tribulations. At first, Garritt and I tried to truly embrace the Nic Rintoul slogan of "fast and efficient work". However, our aimless efforts mutated fast and efficient into mediocre and clumsy. Paint drops from our brushes often permanently scarred customer's concrete driveways, their streak less windows, and unscathed vinyl siding. Coupled with our naive craftsmanship was our blatant inability to paint any sort of exterior trim. Whether it was a clear-cut window trim or the edge of a soffit Garritt and I painted much like kindergartens color, outside the lines. All of these woeful slip-ups left our customers disappointed to say the very least.

Yet, oddly enough, somewhere in between the crummy paychecks and lackadaisical painting errors in the dead heat of summer, Garritt and I grew a keen love for the College Pro Painters lifestyle. Our repetitive failures fueled a whole new spirited motivation. Painting became more than just a paycheck, it was a passion. Suddenly, the money had lost its meaning. Despite suffering docks in pay, Garritt and I genuinely wanted to do a professional level job for our customers. Practice hadn't made perfect, but our painting skills had become respectable. And although our best efforts still weren't exemplary, customers took notice of our admirable work ethic and steadfast passion.

"Mr. and Mrs. Kovorski, we would like once again just to sincerely apologize for the spots of paint that have tarnished your vinyl siding beneath the deck. We did our best to remove the stains, but unfortunately there's nothing more we can really do. We are real pleased with

how the deck turned out and we will talk to our boss about a partial refund in regards..." Garritt started before the homeowner interrupted. Apologies had become a part of the job that summer.

"Fellas, don't worry about the little oopsies underneath the deck. We know you boys work too long and hard for little scrap to fuss over a few drips of paint. You fellas really did a bang-up job and you've got a coupla bright futures ahead of you," Mr. Kovorski interjected as he handed us each a fat \$40 dollar tip.

Garritt and I were both so taken aback that we were barely able to manage exchanges of gratitude. We weren't used to this sort of money. More rewarding than the monetary incentive, however, was the radiant smile in which Mrs. Kovorski was advertising. Her smile conveyed satisfaction, and even a hint of appreciation. We felt the warmth and acceptance of a community behind it. A simple smile had never felt so good to Garritt and me.

The official College Pro Painters website cites the company's central mission is "to embrace challenge, innovate, and excel" (College Pro Painters). Regardless of all Nic's empty promises, our deliberate customer deception, long hours with little pay, and countless painting blunders, Garritt and I's summer as College Pro Painters blossomed into a tremendous learning experience. Garritt and I embraced the challenge of learning foreign concepts such as marketing door to door, customer service, managing a small scale operation, and all things painting. We innovated by developing personable relationships with customers and passionately painting above the College Pro questionable standards. Through the process of this all, Garritt and I excelled. We developed stern work ethics, emerged as effective leaders, grasped the importance of responsibility, established working relationships with customers and had become even closer friends. We had excelled as business men, friends, and as individuals overall. As College Pro Painters, together, Garritt and I were able to realize our infinite potentials.

“Our core purpose is: together, realizing potentials”

(College Pro Painters)

